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UNISON

Unison

A
SELECTION OF POEMS
from
CHOIR PRACTICE

EDITED BY
ELLEN M. CARROLL

315

Hernando County Library
Brooksville, Florida

ERNEST HARTSOCK
THE BOZART PRESS
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FOREWORD

Choir Practice, a column of Contemporary Poetry appearing monthly in the Charleston (S. C.) *Evening Post,* has, since its inauguration early in 1929, included among its contributors a number of the most interesting American poets. And since newspaper verse is of physical necessity fugitive, though it often deserves the boon of publication within book covers, the editor of *Choir Practice* has answered the demand of readers of the column by collecting into this volume a representative selection of reprints, desiring thereby to put into permanent form a number of poems which have already enjoyed a wide popularity.

Certain poems in this volume have been reprinted from various sources. For special permission to use "Druid's Advice," by Ernest Hartsock, the editor is indebted to the New York *Times.* Other publications whose editors have kindly allowed poems from their pages to be used, include: *Palms, Poetry World, Kaleidoscope, Contemporary Verse, Bozart, Muse and Mirror, Japm, The Step Ladder, American Poetry Magazine, L'Alouette, Driftwind, Attic Salt, Will-o'-the-Wisp, The Bookfellow Anthology, Cleveland Club Woman,* and *Poems of the Niagara Frontier.*

To the editor of the Charleston *Evening Post* and a poet friend, especial thanks are due for invaluable assitance and support, which has made possible four guest pages. To all the poets represented herein, my appreciation is due.

—Ellen M. Carroll.

Charleston, S. C.

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BRIEF ABANDON *By Herbert Daugherty*

WINTER SEA

We came upon the sea at last, cold blue
Against the firs; if summer once had been
A rainbow in the islands, nothing grew
Out of the solid rock now; wing and fin
Flashed no more in the sunlight; one gull flew
Across an empire that, at last bereft
Was muted silver; finally we knew
Here was a waste where there was nothing left.

And yet the tides were musical, as if
The sea were moon-washed still; we heard the
swell
Of surf beneath the dark and leaning cliff,
The iron tolling of a muffled bell
Beyond the wasted beach, that seemed to mark
The margin of the winter and the dark.

—Harold Vinal.

BRIEF ABANDON

This is a day for daisies. Let us go
Like swallows down the highways of the air,
And we shall find the daisies like a snow
Suspended on the hills of everywhere.

Give me your hand. Thru woodlands dark and
sweet
We shall thread April's pattern like a feather,
With wanton hearts and summer-haunted feet.
Do not delay. We are not long together.

And days of brief abandon will not come
When we are under ground. So let us yield
To blood that battles in us like a drum,
And find the breast of beauty in a field.

There will be days for tears and dust hereafter:
This is a day for daisies and for laughter!

—Ernest Hartsock.

DRUID'S ADVICE

Walk gently in the woods, for they belong
  To beautiful, bewildered little brothers;
One hasty step and you may crush the song
  Of beetle or snail that snugly smothers
Its tremulous migration in the moss.
One witless move may mark immortal loss!

The wood-rat listens and the squirrels scurry
  When random footfalls crash the crystal quiet;
The thrasher flusters in his speckled hurry,
  The lark and lizard tramp the leaves in riot.

Walk gently in the woods. Each worm and ant
  Thrills with the musky flavor of the turf;
The drowsy snake is warmly jubilant
  In mottled jade. The sun's tempestuous surf
Is ointment rich as myrrh unto the moth,
Swooning in ecstasies of summer sloth.

The spider dreams in hanging halls of silk
  Tethered to spikenard and to bramble thickets;
The savory air melts in this throat like milk,
  Earth-drunk doze the tree-toads and the crickets.

Sweeter than apples is the pine-tree smell,
  Spiced with the intimate small scent of fur—
Rash human, do notbreak the forest spell,
  Nor bear the dismal mark of blunderer!
You tread among fraternal multitudes
Of warm, wild hearts. Walk gently in the woods!

—Ernest Hartsock.

TROPIC RAIN

Wong Lee is haunted in the grave tonight,
Who sleeps and sleeps, but does not hear the sound
Of rain in leaves of oleanders, white
In misted blossoms that the earth has found.
Wong Lee remembers, the long moments through,
The lonely accent of the rain that falls
Like song down many a street or avenue,
Like a girl's laughter over shadowed walls.

Wong Lee lies troubled, as half-brooding, now,
Above the smothered purple of the shore,
The palm-trees bend, bough against deepened
bough;
The trade winds drift; yet from an open door
One hears, beyond the hushed Kolea lane,
The grief of ukuleles in the rain.

—Samuel Heller.

TROPIC ETCHING

Paim trees bend in the moon
Where this lagoon
Whitens under the light;
The winds of night

Blow over the earth that broods
In tropic solitudes,
Through flowered gardens deep,
Drowsy with sleep.

The oleanders gleam;
Strange as a dream
The shadowed world has grown;
I am alone.

—Samuel Heller.

BUTTERFLY

Unfold a minute from its white cocoon:
  You are my web of hours of peace and flurry,
The hour of lighted wick, the hour of noon;
  You are my idleness and you my hurry.

We are so held together in time-spun mesh—
  Gossamer woven strands on an aeon of breeze—
Yet are but flash of a silken second of flesh:
  We are one moment between eternities.

—Benjamin Musser.

EQUINOX

Gray rain, gray sand, gray gulls wheeling up
Over tumbling mountains of yellow gray foam;
Needle rain of silver crying to the gray wind,
Crying of a soul in a storm gray home:

Storm in the north wind, song in the east wind,
Storm in the song of the wind of the sea,
Sing as you fling your salt spume higher,
Do what you will, you have made me free!

Sing wind; sing pain, pain that is dear to me,
Pain that is piercing as the rain is keen;
Here by the lonely, the singing and gray wave,
Do what you will, you have made me clean!

—Benjamin Musser.

CONVERSATION

He felt the wind along his cheek,
Mirrored the dark cloud in his eyes;
Only the slanting rain could speak
A language that he knew was wise.

He who was weary of the sound
Of human voices, learned this day
A wisdom and a tongue is found
In the rain's voice and the wind's way.

No better converse can be known
Than where the wind and rain have blown.

—Benjamin Musser.

A CITY CEMETERY

Here is a garden lovely as a dream,
Set down in walls of crowding steel and stone,
Young willows wade in polished pool and stream,
And mists of powdery pink bloom are blown
Across cool lawns where dryads might have
strayed.
Frail spires and fretted towers pierce the blue;
Thru lacing leaves a curve of collonade
And arch brings templed Attica to view.
Bees softly boom; white pigeons whirr and gleam;
A sound of bells drifts thru the honeyed air . . .
Here is a garden lovelier than dream,
For men who sleep too deep to know or care.

—Lori Petri.

PATTERNED

I wove a pattern;
blue and white
checks alternating
endlessly,
until I wearied,
Day and night
their repetition
sickened me.

An ampler loom
before me lies
more subtle arabesques;
a tree
of life; a bird
of paradise;
a cloud;
an unrevealing sea

and, beyond will,
in each design
eyes . . . .that forever
follow mine.

—Grace Stone Coates.

THE JOURNEY

Dawn flung itself on the mountains
With the rush of an eager boy;
I shouted beside life's fountains,
I shall enjoy, enjoy!

As day withdraws its ample
Promise, and night hangs sure,
I say to the shards I trample,
I can endure and endure.

—Grace Stone Coates.

FRACTURE

We missed communion by a margin small
  As the tilt of a lens that throws the light astray,
The twist of a lock whose tumblers will not fall,
  The twirl of a disk, as symphonies fade away.

Sever us with a stroke, O Surgeon-Master
  Life! Let us be strangers brother to brother;
Spare us intrinsic agony of fracture
  Whose close-held edges are torture to each other.

—Grace Stone Coates.

AT HATTERAS LIGHT

Here where the frail white strips of sand
  Shake in the desolate sea,
The withered sedges wail on the edges
Of wind-bitten dunes and sandy ledges,
  And the wind blws over me.

The wind blows over, and swift, wild horsemen
  Toss white hair in the sun,
  And I hear the crying gulls and the flying
Curlews forever calling and crying,
  Crying till time is done.

I look at the lighthouse tower and wonder
  When I shall cease to be;
And the wind blows over the dead sea-rover,
Over the bones of lover and lover,
  Over the world and me.

—Howard Mumford Jones.

AT BAY

Swung by the moon the great waves come;
They pound the beach like a brazen drum,
And heat the tide's exordium.

The ocean leaps on its copper zones
And worries ledges to small white stones,
Like a shaggy dog that gnaws earth's bones.

Or like a tiger the stripped sea
Springs upon earth; it will never be
Tamed in the cage of eternity.

My shaken heart is the copper shore
Upon whose zones the great tides pour
Their cycle of thunder forevermore.

Upon its shores the green tides shift;
There the shells and the sea weed drift
To and from in the lapse and lift.

My heart, like earth, is a copper deer
At bay; around its hemisphere
Like emerald hounds the oceans veer!

—E. Merrill Root.

SPARK

Read this when I am dust:
Know that the sentient I
Flared once across the years,
At stars which stud the sky,

Falling, will punctuate
Night with their trail. Who knows
Whence they have come or where
Each flaming pathway goes?

So once I flared and fell,
Know this as but a spark
That sputtered from my trail,
Bound outward in the dark.

—Edith Mirick.

ARMOUR

The sorrow of it was
  Not that grief found her;
But the iron case
  It wrapped around her:

A dark heart alone
  In an armoured city,
Locking in tears,
  Shutting out pity.

—Edith Mirick.

SHADOWS

It is by merest shadows we are bound
To earth; by trivialities of sound
And sight. The trumpet of the cock spells dawn,
Sunlight—a leaf's frail shadow, fleetly gone.

Rain but a haunting drip, the rose
A perfume only; love a flame which glows
Like marshland will-o'-wisps that dance and flit;
Shadows, live—lovely—and indefinite.

—Edith Mirick.

THE RIGADOON OF WITCH-GHOSTS

Up from the abysmal caverns of great stone,
  Athrong upon the sulphurous rim there comes
A troop of scoffing ghosts of hair and bone,
  With whistling skulls and flaunt of beaten
    drums.

Wild on a scream of acrid wind they fled
  Beneath a tent of giant mushrooms, there
To dance again the ghoul-dance of the dead
  Around the smoking altar of despair.

The hoot owls shudder down from limb to limb
  And watch the maddest orgies of the glades,
Their yellow eyes in strange, quick orbits swim,
  Hearing the boasts and ironies of shades.

In malice like the black of burning hells,
  They mock the living with their evil jeers.
With threat and forecast, bane and blasting spells,
  And dance themselves upon a thousand spears.

—John Lee Higgins.

WHITE SHORES

Sundown and saffron glow,
  Glistening rain,
In the marshland low
  Flies the crane.

White sails, gulfs and bays,
  The green flood.
How long the brine stays
  In the blood!

Under the hills I spade
  The heaped sand
To the sunken grade
  Of the strand.

Gray mist and white hulls
  The hills hide,
But ever I hear gulls
  And the tide.

—John Lee Higgins.

THE SONGS I SING

The tapestry so costly wrought
By grief at the loom of my soul;
The curving sea blue skies I seek
When time etches clouds on Life's scroll.

They are the garnet wine that drips
When crushed are the best grapes of life;
Sun's amber rays through stained glass panes;
Rainbows after my hours of strife!

—Elkanah East Taylor.

WINGS AGAINST THE WIND

My thoughts, like wings have lashed the winds
  Of circumstance, of life
Trying to rise above the plane
  Of hate, and tears, and strife.

My thoughts, like wings against the winds
  Are pulsing swift and strong
Seeking to reach my goal . . . to make
  A lasting silver song!

—Elkanah East Taylor.

LOVE

Love is the peach bloom in the soft south winds,
  The fragrance from the opening rose,
  The message of the singing pines,
The violet under April snows.

Love is the wave that seeks the barren shore,
  The silent mountain, king-like, strong,
  The sunlight golden evermore, . . .
The melody of an olden song.

—Elkanah East Taylor.

CANE FIELD SONG

This
is the song
of the cane
Toned in fragrant darkness when the work is done,
From the homely doorsteps, down the gentle lane
Where the cane blades whisper, dreaming of the
sun.
This
is the song
that the cane
Told the tender crying of the steel-guitars,
Taught the ukuleles throbbing underneath the
stars,
Whispered to the husky voices through the moun-
tain rain:
O heart
dear heart
heart of my heart
remember!
Gently
the song
of the cane
Drips like honey from the dream-fed mouth,
Warm and alluring with the sweet ripe South,
Sad and sweet together in a dark rich strain
Full
of the song
that the cane
Wove in the wreathing of the warm wet breeze,
Stole from the honey-sacks of home-bound bees,
Sung to the viol-throb of dear glad pain:
O heart
dear heart
heart of my heart
remember!

—Clifford Gessler.

LEI SONG

(Lei—a wreath of flowers, draped in Hawaii about the shoulders of one arriving or departing, as a sign of affection.)

Twine now the lei
  Round the slim, eager throat;
Pouring words kept to say
  Till the relentless boat

Glides out from the pier
  And the bright streamers part,
Dear ones are never so dear
  As when the sad horns start.

Their cadence of good-byes,
  Whose tones drift softly over
The lifted lips, brimmed eyes
  Of lover and lost lover.

Twine now the lei
  Across the high sweet breast,
Singing, The dear last day
  Of love is loveliest—

    Singing, the bright swift way
  Of brief love is the best!

—Clifford Gessler.

STORM FEAR

Outside the wind is lashing and the gales
Sweep wreckage on the driftwood littered shore.
Many a dream ship, daring storms at dawn,
Shall sail no more.
My words are frightened sea gulls. Even they
  Fear gaping sea and the dark lowered sky.
They huddle close and tremble in my heart . . . .
  Can small words die?

—Rosa Zagnoni Marinoni.

EPITAPH ON MORTALITY

And when I go you need not weep for me
I am the bright red leaf, I am the sea!

And when I leave this sphere, let no heart cry.
I am the earth, the wind, the stars, the sky!

I am the echo of the storm, the thunder.
The firing lash that rives a tree asunder!

The cry of the lean coyotes in the night . . .
Of boreal chilling flares, I am the light!

Not I the cup, but I the ruby red,
Be it of wine or life of men who bled!

Take you from me! From you, I nothing take.
The ocean does not borrow from the lake!

Not mine the gray, the somber, drab and dun . . .
I am the black, the red, the gold, the sun!

Weep you for little voices who complain . . .
Their passing, coming, staying are in vain!

I am the why of love, the fount of laughter . . .
Weep not for me, but for the followers after!

—Rosa Zagnoni Marinoni.

CLOUDS

When black hawks dart as rapiers through white
clouds
That blind the sun's bright eye,
I think the birds are searching for men'sdreams
The clouds have stolen as they drifted by.

For clouds are wandering souls, condemned to drift
Without a joy or pain,
And in their loneliness they filch man's dreams,
Then give them back to earth, in tears of rain.

—Rosa Zagnoni Marinoni.

SOMETHING ABOUT SEPTEMBER

September, you flaunter with Death at the door,
You stand nonchalantly and bargain for more!
You gild all sere edges, you pocket spent seed,
And strew dying hedges with bright jewel weed.

How gaily you deck yourself for your last hour,
In ruby-red garland and golden-tinged flower;
I steep in the fragrance of blossom and vine,
Quite dizzy with quaffing such warm heady wine.

These down-swaying asters, they hear your refrain
And quicken . . . to yield second blooming again!
September, blithe loser, you hear your knell chime
Yet stand nonchalantly and bargain for time.

—Jewell Miller.

STARRY UNIVERSE

Sphere-turning, star-whirling Universe,
  Release us cosmic songs
Of planetary systems swung
  In bright, celestial throngs!
  (Peace to our small complainings,
  Surcease for woes and wrongs.)

Measureless, soul-shaking Universe,
  Your diapason pounds
Out mighty chords of rhythmic beat
  In full, sonorous sounds:
  (Strength to our weakling spirits,
  Healing for puny wounds.)

Magical, breath-taking Universe,
  You yield us gayer themes
When suns wring out from winter's hand
  Music of freshet streams:
  (Joy to the young, spring-seeker,
  Herald of summer's dreams.)

Rhythmical, changeless and orderly,
  The rule of ordained things
Determines the measure of our march,
  The flight-length of our wings;
  (Peace to our small repinings,
  Our restless murmurings.)

—Jewell Miller.

THE AMETHYST TALISMAN
(From the Greek Anthology)

This talisman that has the power
To draw a man from overseas,
Or lure the bride from out her bower
To leave her bed of wedded ease . . .
Gold-set and chased with scroll design,
Carved from a writhen amethyst,
O Cyprian, take this gift of mine,
Tied with a Tyrian lamb's-wool twist
About its middle . . . vowed to thee
By one who from Larissa came,
The lovers' friend, thy votary:
Nico the Sorceress by name.

—May Folwell Hoisington.

ANCHORITE

Stylites on his pillar saw the sun
Rise over Egypt . . . faithful discus-god,
Smiling a blessing on the lotus-pod.
The desert anchorites, in caverns spun
With dew-filled webs, knew racing Spring begun
Or winnowed autumn ended. Peace could nod
A benison on feathered friends. Once rod
And scrip sufficed until all days were done.

Our sanctity today is hard to win:
The mind must mount its pillar to the sky,
Or find its cave, secure from tempting sin,
Where worldly garments may be all laid by;
An where Time's bird may sing, Time's spider spin,
And souls may look their Maker in the eye.

—May Folwell Hoisington.

HOME IN THE SOUTH

Beyond low hills there is a sparkling lake
Of lapis-lazuli and amethyst,
Where tall pines, clustering, have bent to make
The sky and their reflections keep a tryst.

Young willows, with a smoke-soft foliage
Of palest lime, push impudently through
The pines, as though they would deep thirst
assuage,
While in reality, for just a view
Of their own reflected loveliness.
Wild geese
From some far Northern land, have stilled awhile
Keen longing for vast distances. At peace
They lie in reedy shallows. Strange ducks file
Through ruffled water or ascend above
To whirl in flocks on iridescent wings.
One hears the wistful note of cooing dove.
From wooded mysteries a veery sings.

On up the hillside from the water's rim,
March dog-wood trees in twos, like girls who go
Through green aisles to their first communion.
Slim
And young, all veiled in blooms of gold-pierced
snow.
In fern-grown, cloistered nooks, azaleas build
Brown altars where burn brightly fragrant flames
Of yellow, rose and white. The woods are filled
With maple and with redbud trees, gay frames
For all spring's fragile charm.
At last we come
To the full meaning of it all, the shrine
Of beauty's paradise—a house, love's home . . .
And ah, thank God, both love and home are mine!

—Edith Tatum.

RUINS

Upon the corner of a lonely street
Stand chimneys, gaunt and blackened, crumbling
walls—
Once a gay home where echoed dancing feet,
Vibrant with life . . . a prey to hungry fire.
Dark shadows stabbed by restless bats, weird calls
Of eerie night birds, now surround this pyre
Of youth's bright memories and April dreams
That never will be real again. It seems
The symbol of dead lives we sometimes meet—
Deep-scarred and shriveled by unleashed desire.

—Edith Tatum.

HALF MEASURES

A shooting start! I fling
My arms out wide in ecstasy
To see it quivering
Like lambent flame on dusky wing
Straight through infinity.

It falls and disappears.
With aching heart and empty hand
I turn, and glimpse through tears
My star which slid down jewelled spheres
Glow wanly in the sand.

—Frances Mazo.

AT THE POOL

Autumnal sunshine spills its wealth
As if by stealth
Between the drooping branches where
They make a shaded sphere
About the limpid pool whose face
Reflects their grace,
Returning every curve and sweep
In its translucent deep;
While waves of air vibrate with sound
All heaven bound
From deep toned, husky negro throats
In slowly rhythmic notes.

"Jee-sus in the watah"

There stands a figure robed in white,
The proselyte
To be baptized. The singing dies
As parson Lemuel cries,

"If you been lyin,' you gotta stop lyin',
If you been gamblin' you gotta stop gamblin'."

His voice exhorting, threatening.
Or lingering
Swings down the lazy afternoon;
The women sway and croon.

"Ah, yeah, ah yeah,
Jee-sus in the watah."

The parson stoops; a splash is heard.
Without a word
The dripping man is led away.
Once more they chanting sway.

"Glory be to the Father,
And to the Son,
And to the Holy Ghost."

—Frances Mazo.

LATE AUTUMN IN THE COUNTRY
(A TRIZAD)*

*Trizad—a form devised and named by the writer.

Whirling leaves
And dripping eaves—
The fields wear misty gray.

Blinking stars
Through bare-limb bars—
The night outshines the day.

Silver lanes
And jeweled panes—
Jack Frost is at his play.
—Frederick Herbert Adler.

A HARLEQUIN WINTER DAY

The morning saw a harlequin
  Who brought back summer weather.
He pranced in party-colored tights
  And whisked a sword of leather.

The shaven head belied his youth;
  The chubby cheeks had smutches.
When evening came, he tore his mask
  And hobbled off on crutches.
—Frederick Herbert Adler.

A ROCKY SEA COAST

The ocean is a milliner,
On windy days
She keeps her shop along the shore
In little bays.

She flounces skirts in every whirl
That sweeps along.
She curls her plumes along the rocks
And sings a song.

She never trims two hats alike,
And artist's wiles,
The ocean has a modiste's way,
Of changing styles.

—Frederick Herbert Adler.

THE SILENT HOUR

The twilight wears the mourning hue
Of violets. There is no sound;
Not even aging leaves are loosed
To rustle to the quiet ground.

The wind seems waiting to be free,
Yet holds aloof from things that grow;
It is the hushed and poignant hour
Before the stars of evening glow.

A tender rapture of repose
Holds wide the gates of Memory;
The day is passing; and the earth's
Farewell is this hushed eulogy.

—Kate Randle Menefee.

MORNING IN THE CORN FIELD

These vivid blooms that rise up from the ground
To twine about the stubble's ragged gold
Bring in their tender hearts the patterns found
In stars the meadows of the night unfold.
Along the silvered distance of the field,
Deep blue and lilac, pink and white they rise
Like magic waves of color April's yield
When winter grief is lifted from the skies.

Clinging like dreams of loveliness, they tell
The raptured secrets of the once green corn;
And now when weary summer says farewell
And harvests fill the autumn's golden horn,
They weave a garland of the morning stars
To crown the stubble's sacrificial scars.

—Kate Randle Menefee.

DISCARDED

Roses red.
Painted lips,
Scarlet red
Petals seared by love's caress.

Roses white.
Pallid lips,
Faded white
Petals of love's carelessness.

—Charles A. A. Parker.

A MODERN REBEL

He was a high brow
With the brain of a wheel-barrow
In the cushioned body of a Cadillac.

—Charles A. A. Parker.

STORM ARISING

Somewhere black clouds have gathered, and the sea
That held a mirror for the brooding day,
Rolls like a waking sleeper, restlessly—
Each breaking wave now casts a higher spray . . .
And now, mysterious black whips are lashing
Blue waters lately dreaming in the sun;
Each moment sends the martial breakers crashing
Nearer the fort of sand we rest upon.
I see upon your face the growing fear
That the crescendo of the waves arouses,
And mark you cross yourself as you draw near—
You who have known the calm of cloistered
houses . . .
But look! For here is Life, majestic, free,
Riding the white-plumed stallions of the sea.

—Anderson M. Scruggs.

MARCH FANTASIES

Oh Merry March, once more I hear
Your rapping at my window pane.
And glad am I (for winter's drear)
To hear your rippling song again.
Your greeting yields to no suave form
Of honeyed words; your frosts and fires
Just take my quaking heart by storm
And wake a medley of desires;
I'd like to sail upon your breast
To some remote and lofty plane—
Gaze down from yon high moon's pale crest
On earth a-weary and inane,
For why should I, a trivial store
Of mind, conceived by fragile breath,
Tossed by the winds upon life's shore,
Be tractable from life to death?

—Kathryn McCormick Smith.

NOONDAY

Today we drink of life's great wonder-cup
The presence of the other each to each;
And Love, fair hostess, smiles and fills it up
And holds it level to our urgent reach.
A consciousness of beauty everywhere
We garner with earth's wealth along the way,
Noonday of life! a vintage rich and rare
While fate presides gracious, brimful as May.

But Time, solicitous will trail ere long
With his unerring and impartal tread;
Mellowing the drear gladness of your song,
Weaving a crown of silver for my head;
Now, even as dusk creeps softly through the air
His too fond fingers touch and streak my hair.

—KATHRYN McCORMICK SMITH.

THE STRONG

She is so fearless
They all said.
(They fearless are
Whose hopes are dead.)

She is so glad,
She is so gay!
(Some weep at night
To smile by day.)

The weak ones moan
And are carried along
By the strong who fight
To the lilt of a song.

—FLORENCE R. KEENE.

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UNDED THE LEAVES

Some while ago we strolled beneath
The happy trees, a gorgeous wreath
Of varied greens, dew-petted leaves,
That soothed our many trysting eves.

Alas, their gaiety is fled;
Not the living but the dead
Now they shelter, once and then
Churned by winds or feet of men.

The green leaves watched us climb the hill,
The dead leaves huddle low and still;
Fragrant leaves of bliss—tomorrow
Sere and bitter leaves of sorrow.

Green leaves hid our loves in May;
Dead, they wait to hide our clay.
Time's a mammoth cave that weaves
Echoes, echoes of dead leaves.

—John Kearns.

NIGHT AT SEA

Another pulse beat of Eternity
Throbs down the placid phosphorescent sea;
The rigging hums a song of distant lands,
Then God bends down, with silence in His hands.

—Anton Romatka.

TEMPTATION
(Tanka)

The moon, a golden coin,
Lies in Heaven's shop window;
Romancing poets
Now urge their Muse to steal it
For a necklace of beauty.

—Anton Romatka.

A DOG TO HIS MASTER

O Man, I love you so!
I'm sure that you can never know
How I revere you.
If you should go away
And I should know that you would stay
Where I'd not hear you
Call me to come to you,
Our comradeship to share anew,
My heart would break then.
I'd never understand
That after kindness from your hand,
You could forsake then.

If you sailed far from me,
I'd try, my Man, to swim to sea.
No ship could hide you.
O Man, if you were dead
I'd come and lie down by your bed—
I'd die beside you.
If men to worlds must go
Of which mere dogs might never know,
Please try to take me.
I'd be your faithful friend,
In heaven or hell would still defend.
Don't, don't forsake me!

—Harriet Olds Henderson.

ADRIFT

Lonely little boat
Drifting out to sea
Far and far away
From all that used to be!
Is there no anchorage
Where you can ever stay?
Must you drift on and on . . .
Away . . . away . . . away . . .

—Harriet Olds Henderson.

MEA CULPA

It creeps between me and my prayers,
It stands beside my bed at night
To sow my heart with bitter tares,
And pierce my soul with fright.

For my most secret thought had willed
Destruction, and the womb of time
Had ripened it until it killed
A thing that was sublime.

—Virginia Spates.

LOVE'S ENCHANTMENT

This vision stands supreme
Among the things I see
Within the heart of memory:

A night when substance wore
The airy form of beams
Beneath an ediface of dreams.

Roses embraced the air
In ecstasy; beside
Deep water some intent bird cried.

High in the soaring blue,
So vastly dim and far,
A miracle appeared—a star.

O love-enchanted night! . . .
Thank God, we still remember
Springtime in our gray December.

—Virginia Spates.

LEADED GLASS SAINT

You shaped those colored bits, the tales they spun
About your life, and joined them with such skill
That there evolved with glassy fringe and frill
Your saintly pattern marvelously done;
And thus, for all your checkered life, you won
His soul and did not rest in quiet until
He raised you up and framed you in to fill
His Gothic window opening to the sun.

But you resorting to the blind device
As old as woman, set his house aflame.
How you glowed up! But in that glow, alas,
The lead that joined you melted down like ice,
And you, collapsing in the window frame,
Fell out, a little heap of broken glass.

—Israel Newman.

SILENCES

Give me your silences, who give your eyes
  Wherein my soul may bathe and thus be healed;
Who give your arms' white sense, your hair that lies
  Cool gold against you, your small hands that yield,
Your body's clinging freshness: these, at most,
  Are yours, not you; and I am as the tide
That breaks in fresh, white fire against the coast.
  It may embrace but must remain outside.

Speak what you will of others; let me be
  In those magnetic moments one with you,
When life exceeds its language—though as free
  As rivers are at midnight, winding through
The hearts of cities—flowing as before,
  Yet stitched with rows of lights to either shore.

—Israel Newman.

MIRRORS

I know that I shall never see
  A jonquil's blowing gold,
Nor regal lily holding high
  A chalice white and cold,
Nor catch the fragrance from the deep
  Blue iris in a row,
Nor walk the sunny garden paths
  Where ruddy dahlias grow,
But that your image I shall see—
  Your soft and silky hair,
White throat, blue eyes, and crimson lips—
  Held in the garden's snare.

—Winnie Lynch Rockett.

A POET'S ANGUISH

Within the gray cells of my torpid brain
Fair prisoners cry, again and yet again,
Imploring for release. Against the bars
They lean, their wistful eyes upon the stars.

Imprisoned thoughts. . . . Such fragile, lovely
  things!
They smile intriguingly and tease for wings;
Oh, impotence! To know my lips enchain
Sweet songs that struggle to escape in vain!

My stubborn pen stabs through the heart of me,
And not to write is agony.

—Winnie Lynch Rockett.

PIGEONS

Thorse circling planes are pigeons, flying over
The long slope,
The fields of clover.
They drop, and rise, and circle and swing
    together—
Sapphire neck and gray wing-feather.

At the top of the hill, I am turning
To see them again;
I am yearning
To watch the play of their wings, till night
    slips over
The long slope, the fields of clover.

—Florida Watts Smyth.

RADIO PROGRAM

The brief strange air he played
Had crossed a continent
And left its mark
On minds that stirred and swayed
To touch those light wings
As it went
Swift singing through the dark.
With violin clasped tight
And head bent low,
He stepped into the night.
He moved where traffic moved,
Mechanical and slow
He dreamt of music
In triumphant flight.

—Florida Watts Smyth.

SEED

Life gave me something more than this stark form
Etched on the sky through autumn afternoons.
It gave me one green branch that flourishes
Above the quietness of level lawns—
One branch whose winged seeds, rooted in the
grass,
May lift green loveliness to this bare space.

—Florida Watts Smyth.

SEA SLEEP

And the water will fold over
My arms and legs and lips,
And move with a swirling motion
Over my breasts and hips.

And I will drop down to darkness
And make a pebble's stir,
While the strange sea weeds and mosses
Wrap round me like soft fur.

There will be none to mourn me
When the sea slips over my eyes
And the ringing sounds of the water
Echo their death sweet sighs.

And I shall sleep with the sea shells
Twisted into my hair,
Dreaming your fingers are resting
As often they rested there.

—Helen E. Hecht.

HEARTACHE

Heartache is such a passing thing—
One should not search about
For lovely luster lost from stars
Or moon-trails wearied out.
Now when the skies are very blue
And gay with bright birds on the wing,
Why do I sit and weep for love
With heartache such a passing thing?

—Helen E. Hecht.

SACRIFICE

Little mother, sleeping there,
You are young and very fair;
Sunlight on your eyes and hair
Shining whitely.

Not for you the earthly quest;
You have met the unseeen guest
With your baby on your breast
Touching lightly.

Blend of earth and soul's desire,
Child and mother fused in fire;
Brands to feed the ancient fire
Flaming brightly.

—Shirley Dillon Waite.

THEY LINGER—

Strange fancies flit
Across an aged face . . .
Fragments
Of a haunting dream,
And as they fade
I catch a lingering trace,
Like stipled shadows
On a placid stream.

—Shirley Dillon Waite.

WHITE BUTTERFLIES

I'll come to you as butterflies white
Like floating petals on the fragrant wind,
Fashioning messages—soft wings back-pinned
For love, folded heart-shaped, for sheer delight.
I'll dart in ecstacy until your sight
Following the shafted, sun-tuned dust is blind
In the joy of diaphanous rainbow hues behind
The mists that feather at our sudden flight.

I'll hover longingly, with tiny flings
To earthly gardens where heaven kindled flowers
In the red of June for your dear eyes to see.
The air caresses and the fire-bird sings;
White petaled butterflies flash through the hours
You spend, dear heart, beneath the crab-rose tree.

—Ada Borden Stevens.

BELL BUOY

Storms rock the blue set ocean
Where its dead lie cold;
Over its crest of waves with every motion,
A requiem is tolled.

Requiem to men long sleeping
In the still depths where bones
Of unsung heroes rock, too calm for weeping,
As the wild sea moans.

—Ada Borden Stevens.

FEBRUARY TWILIGHT

A net stake,
Encrusted with barnacles,
Sways in the breeze
As a tern, weary of flight.
A sudden wind,
And the severed stake
Drifts down the bay
With an ebbing tide . . .
While one lone gull
Winging close to the gray water
Goes westward through the smoky air
Toward the setting sun,
And his waiting mate.

—Elliott Driver Jordan.

SHORE LINE (CINQUAIN)

Parchment
Wrinkled and spread
Along the sea, where tides,
Write with the flotsam of the wave,
Strange words.

—Elliott Driver Jordan.

END OF DAY

Sunset
A festival
Where gypsy clouds attend
In gay attire, to toast their king
Adieu.

—Elliott Driver Jordan.

MEMORY

Out of the past
That cannot die,
From a great evening
I descry
Two hawks to a hill
Through a red, red sky;
Two wild doves homing.
As wild mates fly;
A bright tear brimming
In a beautiful eye;
One of us saying
We must not cry—
Long, long ago
As we said good-bye.

—Archibald Rutledge.

RESURRECTION

In the snowy hollow
Of the frozen hill;
Deeply, darkly,
When the eve was chill;
Sternly, tenderly,
By the icy rill
Love's dream I buried
Past good or ill.

Long, long after,
As I went by,
A sudden gleaming
Did I spy;
It was a violet's
Amethyst's eye
Blazoning gaily,
"Dreams never die!"

—Archibald Rutledge.

PERISHABLE

The essence of love
In a vial of frail glass,
The essence of love,
O that such, so rare above
All, can break at a word, alas!
And all its loveliness pass,
The essence of love.

—Ethel King.

A GARDEN

A garden I would like to make
Of life, with blooms and healing herb.
Here nature her sweet way could take
In the garden I would like to make.
Only the weeds and thorns I'd break,
But with no formal plan I'd curb
The garden I would like to make
Of life, with blooms and healing herb.

—Ethel King.

A NEBULAR HYPOTHESIS

Are we so very sure the stars
Are fixed and constant? Could they be
The headlights of celestial cars
Parked up there temporarily,
While all the owners of them go
To take in some amusing show—
Perhaps sit watching us below?

—Ethel King.

SOUTHERN BREEZES

Magnolia

Like love's
Message written
On waxen petals white,
Magnolia scented breeze perfumes
Southern night.

Crepe Myrtle

Pinkly sweet
From flesh to red,
Crepe Myrtles share perfumed
Loveliness impartially, like
Young girls.

Yellow Jasmine

From tree
To fence, through hill
And dale, yellow jasmine
Climbs, binding close with fragrant chains
Southern hearts.

—Anne Southerne Tardy.

DOOMED

Tall, straight and beautiful the pine
Stands brave above her sister trees.
Her lyric boughs hold melody divine,
Remembered loveliness of summer's breeze.
Sun crowned, she holds an amulet,
A nest in branches pine-perfumed.
Sun crowned and glad! Does she forget
The circling gash which marks her doomed?

I wish I could be like you, pine tree,
Bravely hiding the wounds of the years.
Sing clear from my heart a symphony
Of joyous loving and conquered fears.
Forgetting blighted blossoms—early doomed,
Remembering—the flowers that bloomed.

—Anne Southerne Tardy.

HALF MOON

I saw a yellow half-moon
  Above the dark trees,
The ruddy sword of Mars,
  The jewelled Pleiades.

I saw a dream of life
  Where two roads meet;
One climbed far away,
  The other held my feet

Deep in dewy grass
  And sweet marjoram
That would not let me pass
  Till I had gathered some.

I saw a yellow half-moon,
  The piercing sword of Mars—
I saw the lonely high-road
  Among the silver stars.

—Sally Bruce Kinsolving.

WANTON

April in her nakedness
Is lovelier than in any dress
Summer might weave for her to wear—
Autumn in gold or purple spare.

Ankle deep in bending grass,
Slipping by us as we pass,
Losing herself in some green wood,
She calls to us in wanton mood,

Scattering sweetness on the air—
Wild-apple, cherry, plum or pear,
And yellow stars of jessamine
Clustered on a pendant vine.

—Sally Bruce Kinsolving.

FIVE CINQUAINS

Lost Words

Lost words,
Where have you been
So long? "I went in grief
And now, I come to you with love
And joy."

Magnolia Leaves

With crisp
Clear sound the leaves
Fall from the great green tree,
And lie like foot-prints on the cold
White stone.

Autumn

Green leaves
Don't turn too soon . . .
'Twas then he went alone . . .
Now I await the burgeoning
Of spring.

That Which Abides

Last night
You came to me
And breathed my name and held
Me close, to prove that only love's
Eternal.

Life's Autumn

Footsteps . . .
So stealthily
Of joy and sorrow blent . . .
Are but the falling russet leaves
Of life.

—Mary Pollard Tynes.

DARK MOMENT

My heart, why are you silent
When I need your laughter—
Where hills are steep
I need your laughter!

Your voice alone shall urge me on.
Come soon!—I feel the rain.
Then close your bleeding lips forever
I will not bid you speak again.

—Jerry Clason.

BROKEN SONNET

Could I remember that broken song
That we sang so long ago
The thunder of the years has dimmed it low
And hushed the strain we thought so strong;
Time's swift feet have ground it in the mire,
Covered it by wind and sleet and frost—
It moans to me that it is lost.
Our song that was so like the singing fire.

If there should be another song for us
Life and dreams would blend a word
That we could set to music; thus
To sing a sonnet that would seem the same
And take the place of what we've heard;
Could we but find another song, another
name.

—Jerry Clason.

CONFIDENCE

Blue, windy stars, bend low to catch
My confidence: to you I come—
Let neighbors lift my cottage latch
Who only think me dumb.

Good housewives know my cake's not poor,
(My loaves so sweet are light and crusty,)
But gossip when I seek the moon
Or vagrant highways dusty.

And, yes, I like, each quiet year
As Abel Jensen's second wife,
But when I see his eyes I fear
An all-too-earthly life.

So, lift me to the gusty skies,
Where breathless beauty dances,
Or help me carry to his eyes
These newer radiances.

Stars, let down your net of rays,
Oh, moon, your luring silver ladder,
For when I talk of soul, he says
"I think she's growing madder."

—Evelyn M. Watson.

SYMBOLOGY: (*The Waterfall*)

Thus have I seen Death take great souls:
First the Rapids—the hurried mind, the speedy
pulse, the eagerness to go, to stay—
Like huddled water swept for aye. . . .
When that the chanting river rolls
Majestically away. . . .
Then that massy, solid pour of strangely silent
water like the Deep—
The plunge, so sudden, (at the last) down that
precipitous lone Steep. . . .
And then the Trinity of rainbows in the spray,
(like prayers, we say)—
And a *new-born river leaps away,* too eagerly. . . .
And so it is with them, with me—with *men*
Through lake, and waterfall, we find
The Sea—
Waters unto waters once again.

—Evelyn M. Watson.

BARS

The spring was late, and so his early crop
Had rotted as it lay beneath the soil;
A rainy summer kept him much indoors
His arms too stiff for toil.

The snow had early drowned the weedy farm
Which seemed too much for one weak man to
cope;
Each season brought new failure and new ills
To smother fading hope.

And so he died, a victim of heartbreak,
So often had he beat against the bars,
A prisoner of sorrow, loss and pain
Which shut out heaven and stars.

—Elizabeth Davis Richards.

O. HENRY

He loved to gaze upon the restless stream
Of human Life, to watch emotion's play;
And probing deep within the hearts of men
Revealed the tragedies which day by day
Beset mankind, in hut or mansion house;
Perception whetted by advertisity
To an uncanny keenness, he enthralls
With tales of hope, despair and mockery.

He knew romance in every guise she wears;
And Life to him was like an open book,
He turned the leaves to satisfy each whim
And read a heart-break in a single look.
Out of the laughter, poverty and tears
He wove undying magic through the years.

—Elizabeth Davis Richards.

FRAGILE

Life is a frail and lovely thing,
The dawn, a hope, a fear,
A shadow and a broken dream,
A tear.

Life is so short, a muffled beat,
A little flickering spark;
A touch of hands, a word, a sigh,
The dark.

—Elizabeth Davis Richards.

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